

Your response

Question	Your response
<p>Question 1: Do you agree with our assessment of the potential impact on specific groups of persons?</p>	<p>No response provided.</p>
<p>Question 2: Do you agree with our Welsh language impact assessment?</p>	<p>No response provided.</p>
<p>Question 3: Do you agree with our proposed approach to setting the new Channel 4 licence?</p>	<p>The Scottish Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation on Channel 4 licence renewal. We recognise that the current broadcasting landscape is very different to that of 2014 and that managing the transition from a primarily linear delivery model to a digital-first one, while continuing to meet the needs of their audiences, is a key challenge for Channel 4, as it is for all broadcasters. We support Channel 4's strategies to respond to this and other challenges such as fierce competition and changing audience viewing habits, and we welcome the positive progress that has been made to date.</p> <p>At the same time, the Scottish Government recognises the unique role and high-quality outcomes Channel 4 delivers for people across the UK and the need to protect this important role within the UK's mixed and diverse PSB system, including its crucial role in supporting the creative economy, in particular outside London.</p> <p>Channel 4's contribution to the fulfilment of the PSB purposes and its remit, such as supporting the development of people with creative talent, in return for which they receive several regulatory benefits including prominence, needs to be protected and the Scottish Government is concerned that the impact of relaxing some requirements could have an adverse impact on Channel 4's remit and that the creative industries, particularly those outside of London and in the nations, would be disproportionately impacted.</p> <p>Safeguarding investment in distinctive UK content and protecting the delivery of the core elements of its linear output remain vital. Channel 4's publisher-broadcaster status provides a bedrock for the creative industries, creating the conditions for others to invest and playing an important role in developing talent and skills in Scotland.</p>

<p>Question 4: Do you agree with our proposal to retain the condition requiring not less than 208 hours of news programmes in peak viewing time to be included in the Channel 4 service in each calendar year of the licensing period?</p>	<p>The Scottish Government agrees with the proposal.</p>
<p>Question 5: Do you agree with our proposal to remove the lunchtime news scheduling requirement?</p>	<p>As set out in our response to Question 3, the Scottish Government considers that the loosening of requirements could have an adverse impact for audiences. News consumption across broadcast TV remains crucial and it is the range of ways to access, which makes it accessible and convenient for many people.¹ Channel 4's news output is particularly important, especially in engaging younger people and more diverse audiences who other broadcasters find more difficult to reach.² Given the continued importance to audiences of high-quality, trusted, accurate and impartial news, it would be concerning to see any reduction in the current output.</p>
<p>Question 6: Do you agree with our proposal to retain the weekend news scheduling requirement?</p>	<p>The Scottish Government agrees with the proposal.</p>
<p>Question 7: Do you agree with our proposal to require that there are not less than 178 hours in each calendar year of the licensing period of current affairs programmes included in the Channel 4 service which are of high quality and deal with both national and international matters? Do you agree with our proposal to retain the requirement that 80 hours of the 178 hours must be in peak viewing time?</p>	<p>As set out in our response to Question 3, the Scottish Government considers that the loosening of requirements could have an adverse impact for audiences. This would be particularly impacted by a reduction of 30 hours annually.</p> <p>Current affairs programming is a central part of public service media and should continue to enable people to contribute to an informed democratic society.³ Channel 4's services differ from other public service broadcasters' current affairs programmes in their approach and subject matter and in giving a voice to groups that aren't always heard.</p> <p>The Scottish Government welcomes Channel 4's plans to boost outputs on digital to reach wider audiences and amplify those unheard voices, however this should not be at the cost of limiting the current output across linear, which ultimately reduces the amount of current affairs content across the wider PSB ecosystem</p>

<p>Question 8: Do you agree with our proposal to require that:</p> <p>a) at least 45% of the hours of programmes included in Channel 4 in each calendar year are originally produced or commissioned for the service; and</p> <p>b) at least 70% of the hours of programmes in peak viewing time are originally produced or commissioned for Channel 4?</p>	<p>As set out in our response to Question 3, the Scottish Government considers that the loosening of requirements could have an adverse impact for audiences and in particular as a result of the proposed reduction.</p> <p>The content through which Channel 4 primarily delivers its public service remit and creates its brand identity is its original content⁴ and Channel 4 has performed particularly well relating to its originality and innovation. The Scottish Government is therefore concerned by any measures that would impact Channel 4’s remit to provide a broad range of high quality and diverse programming which, in particular: demonstrates innovation, experiment and creativity in the form and content of programmes; appeals to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society; makes a significant contribution to the need for public service channels to include educational programming; and exhibits a distinctive character.</p>
<p>Question 9: Do you agree with our proposals to retain the requirements that, in each calendar year, at least 35% of the hours of programmes made in the UK for viewing on Channel 4 must be produced outside the M25, and at least 35% of expenditure on programmes made in the UK for viewing on Channel 4 must be allocated to the production of programmes produced outside the M25 and must be referable to programme production at a range of production centres?</p>	<p>The response below covers Questions 9 and 10.</p> <p>The Scottish Government’s view is that production outside of the M25 (London) and in the nations is disproportional and that measures should be taken to increase the level of hours and spend. It has been long-held Scottish Government policy that Channel 4 should have a higher quota for network production commissioned from Scotland and our position remains that the quota should be based on population share, in terms of both hours and spend. We believe that a significantly higher proportion than is currently required should come from Scotland.</p> <p>Channel 4 broadcasts the same programming across the UK, which increases and reinforces the need for their production to be representative of all parts of the UK. In return for several regulatory benefits including prominence, we believe it is reasonable to expect that Channel 4 makes considerable progress towards increasing its level of network production outside the M25 and from Scotland, on a fairer basis.</p>

⁴ Ofcom, 2023. [Letter to Channel 4 Corporation on its Statement of Media Content Policy 2022 \(ofcom.org.uk\)](https://www.ofcom.gov.uk/consult/condocs/medias/medias22/medias22.pdf)

Out of London quotas have proven necessary to ensure inward investment in the nations and regions and we welcomed Channel 4's commitment to build a critical mass of higher volume suppliers across the nations and its voluntary target of 50 per cent spend outside of London. We believe that the licensing regime has a critical role in delivering such aims and that quotas provide a means for reflecting the necessary commitments which can better serve audiences and the creative industries.

Channel 4 has made good progress and has consistently delivered beyond the 35% quota on hours and spend outside of London, which is welcomed. However, there is a risk that over the course of the next licence period, the current output could sink to minimum levels. This means that there is an increasing need to mitigate the risk and ensure that the current levels are at least maintained, but ultimately enhanced.

While hours and spend outside of London are consistently above the respective quota, the quotas on hours and spend outside of England remain stagnant and since the quotas were increased to 9% this has not gone far above the minimum level. These quotas need to be a floor and not a ceiling to investment.

While we recognise that there are challenges in addressing the historical imbalance, there is a real risk that 9% becomes a status quo and there is no drive to increase this in line with the aims for public service media across the UK and Channel 4's objective to grow its 4 All the UK strategy. Staying at a status quo says that there is a lack of ambition or strategy to grow the supply from the nations and this will simply continue the dominance of London.

While there are areas for improvement across the BBC's investment in Scotland, the BBC's specific nation quotas more accurately reflect population share, and this has not impeded their strategic development of their supplier base in each of the UK nations to ensure that it is meeting, and often exceeding, its volume and value quotas.

In fulfilling the remit to make a broad range of high-quality content that appeals to the tastes and interests of a culturally diverse society, it is important that Channel 4 is meeting the needs across the diversity of the UK.

As set out in the consultation document, “as well as supporting the creative economy, the MoL and MoE quotas play a role in securing a diverse range of programmes that authentically reflect the lives and interests of communities across the UK.” However, Ofcom’s Public Service Media Tracker shows that perceptions of representation in the nations remains low with only 28% of viewers in Scotland saying Channel 4 TV channels provide ‘programmes that feature my region/country’ well. The percentage is 30% for Wales and 26% for Northern Ireland.⁵ Ofcom considers that Channel 4 needs to do more to improve representation, including by commissioning programmes set in the nations that authentically portray the lives of different communities within them, and we would argue that quotas play a vital role in achieving those aims.

Channel 4 should strengthen their presence in the nations so that they can deliver high-quality authentic content that reflects and appeals to UK society and its diverse communities. The Scottish Government believes that basing commissioners with funding and decision-making power in Scotland will ultimately lead to content which audiences recognise as more authentic and representative and that is why Channel 4’s hub in Glasgow should be strengthened. We agree with Ofcom that there are other ways to further the objective of better representation, and these should be part of the positive steps to improvement. We welcome and encourage measures, such as enhanced commissioning power in the nations, and the Emerging Indie Fund initiative.

In its privileged position as a holder of a public service broadcasting licence, this is a challenge

⁵ Ofcom, 2022. [Public Service Media \(PSM\) tracker - Ofcom](#)

	to Channel 4 that it must take seriously for all the UK.
<p>Question 10: Do you agree with our proposals to retain the requirements that, in each calendar year, at least 9% of the hours of programmes made in the UK for viewing on Channel 4 are produced outside England, and in each calendar year at least 9% of its expenditure on programmes made in the UK for viewing on Channel 4 is allocated to the production of programmes outside England and referable to programme production at production centres in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?</p>	See response to Question 9.
<p>Question 11: Do you agree with our proposal to retain the requirement to transmit at least half an hour of schools programmes, excluding presentation material, in each calendar year of the licensing period?</p>	No response provided.
<p>Question 12: Do you agree with on our proposal to retain the condition that provides that in each calendar year not less than 25% of the total amount of time allocated to the broadcasting of qualifying programmes on Channel 4 must be allocated to the broadcasting of a range and diversity of independent productions?</p>	<p>The Scottish Government recognises that Ofcom is renewing the licence under the current statutory framework and therefore any increase as part of the package of mitigations intended to ensure that Channel 4's role in driving investment in the independent production sector would be safeguarded if it decided to develop its own production capability, would follow once this change is in force. We also recognise that Channel 4 has consistently delivered well beyond these quotas.</p> <p>Channel 4 continues to commission innovative and distinctive content, alongside supporting the independent producers who are the bedrock of our hugely successful and dynamic television production sector. Channel 4 has a unique role in supporting and growing the independent production sector in Scotland and across the UK. For this reason, the Scottish Government strongly supports maintaining and strengthening the quota beyond 25%. It is vital to ensure that the appropriate mitigations are in place to prevent damage to the UK's independent production sector and to ensure the protection of Channel 4's crucial role in supporting the creative economy, in particular outside London.</p>

	<p>A sustainable PSB system and Channel 4’s publisher-broadcaster status provides a bedrock for the creative industries, creating the conditions for others to invest and playing an important role in developing talent and skills in Scotland.</p>
<p>Question 13: Do you agree with our proposal that the Channel 4 licence should be renewed for a period of ten years?</p>	<p>Yes, this is in line with previous and other broadcaster licence periods and the Scottish Government agrees with this proposal. It will be vital that Ofcom ensures that, given the pace of change across the sector, an appropriate review point is considered.</p>

Please complete this form in full and return to Channel4LicenceRenewal@ofcom.org.uk.